

21 March 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of March**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of March: Mauritius (African States), Pakistan (Asian States), Armenia (Eastern European States), Cuba (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Belgium (Western European and other States).

1. SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS

The major issue the President highlighted regarding the special session was the nomination of the chairs of the round tables. The President mentioned that he has taken this matter up also with the predecessors of the current chairs in January and February this year.

It was noted that there has been a letter of invitation to the special session by the Secretary General of the UN. In this letter Member States were invited to participate at the highest level, preferably at the Head of State or Government.

Accordingly, the President noted that the regional chairs might wish to convey to their members, that consideration should be given to the fact that heads of states might be among the participants in the round tables, which would place certain requirements also on the chairs and their ranking.

It was also noted that the resolution 55/13 decided that the Special Session will consist of plenary meetings and four round tables. The chairs will represent all other regional groups except the Western European and other States Group, which group is not required to nominate a chair.

Resolution 55/242, which was adopted in February this year on the organizational issues of the Special Session and the preparatory process, decided on the themes of each round table. The President noted that he hopes this decision will facilitate the selection of the chairs.

Another issue to which the President wanted to draw the attention of the regional chairs for the month of March, was the participation of member states in the round tables.

Resolution 55/242 gives guidance as for how many member states from each geographic group will be able to be included in each of the round tables. This request concerns now also the Western European and other states group.

Resolution 55/242 decided that the round tables shall compose of a mix of member states and United Nations organizations and civil society actors.

2. IMPROVING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSEMBLY

The President informed the chairs that the chairpersons of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) Ambassador Kumalo and Ambassador Asadi had briefed him on the outcome of the JCC meeting. Their message was that there is an overwhelming consensus to improve the working methods of the Assembly and revitalize it and the JCC is supportive to the process.

In order to allow sufficient time for consultations for the time being the President said that he will continue, together with Ambassador Valdes, to consult Member States and major groups.

The President informed that he will prepare a non-paper focusing on implementing existing decisions and circulate it to Member States early April. This paper is meant to facilitate the discussions at the informal/informals of the Plenary to be arranged sometime late April.

3. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The President referred to the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group which was held the previous week. At the meeting the discussions focused on the veto as a voting instrument and the working methods of the Council. The veto is one of the questions that needs to be addressed in order to reach general agreement on the reform.

The papers submitted by the Vice-chairs and the President guided the discussions and participation was active and constructive. The aim is a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. Discussions will continue in May, and as the President hoped the chairs will understand it would be premature to make any comments now on possible outcomes.

4. AFRICA WORKING GROUP

(the Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa)

The President noted that at the organisational session held 20 March the two themes on which the Group will focus its monitoring at its meeting in May were agreed upon They are prevention and post-conflict peace building and education. The Group had also agreed that at the meeting in July/August, the Group will make a short review or wrap up of the outcomes for Africa of the major events which will have taken place up to that time this year.

It was further noted that the meeting heard a statement by Under-Secretary-General Gambari, the main co-ordinator in the Secretariat side for this issue. He pledged the full and co-ordinated support form the Secretariat side, which was very encouraging.

The President had urged Member States to participate actively in the next meeting in May.

5. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT FOLLOW UP

The President told that he continues to follow up the implementation of Resolution 162/55. He has continued to follow up the preparations for major upcoming events to ensure follow up aspect in these processes.

In this connection the President had hosted a luncheon for members of the Bureau of the Small Arms Conference to discuss how that conference can be used as a tool in the implementation of the Summit Declaration. Participants had briefed the President about the progress made, including in the question of non-governmental organization (NGO) participation.

6. VISIT TO JAPAN AND CHINA

The President also informed the chairs that he will be travelling to Japan and China at the end of March at the invitation of the Governments of these countries. As before this trip takes place under the overall umbrella of the Millennium Summit follow up.

In Japan the President will be meeting with the Foreign Minister Kono and in China with Premier Zhu and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Tang.